

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 179338

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ORIGIN CU-04

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 ISO-00 USIA-15 /030 R

DRAFTED BY CU/EA:ABALL:JFW

APPROVED BY CU/EA:RLNICHOLS

USIA/ICS:RCLIFTON(INFO)

USIA/IEA:TLIU(INFO)

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R 300043Z JUL 75

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

UNCLAS STATE 179338

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OEXC, JA

SUBJECT: ASP: NEIL HARRIS

REF: TOKYO 10000

1. HARRIS IS BACHELOR.
2. FULL BIODATA AIRPOUCHED IN JUNE. IF POST DOES NOT HAVE PLS INFORM AND A SECOND COPY WILL BE MAILED APO. NO FULLER CURRICULUM VITAE AVAILABLE.
3. DEPARTMENT HAS AGAIN REQUESTED A PHOTO FROM HARRIS' OFFICE. AS SOON AS IT ARRIVES, WE WILL TRANSMI; TO POST.
4. FOLLOWING IS VERBATIM SUMMARY OF HARRIS PAPER, "WE AND OUR MACHINES":

"MY BRIEF TALK ON "WE AND OUR MACHINES" WILL CONCERN CHANGING AMERICAN ATTITUDES TOWARD TECHNOLOGY AND MACHINE ARTIFACTS. I WILL BEGIN BY REVIEWING THE HISTORIC AMERICAN OPTIMISM ABOUT MECHANIZATION, UNDERSTANDABLE GIVEN THE

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PAGE 02 STATE 179338

LARGELY UNDEVELOPED CHARACTER OF THE LANDSCAPE IN THE

EARLY 19TH CENTURY. NOSTALGIA FOR AN AGRARIAN VISION DID COMPETE WITH SCHEMES OF IMPROVEMENT, BUT EXCEPT FOR A NUMBER OF ARTISTS AND WRITERS, THIS NOSTALGIA DID NOT FORM TOO MUCH CONSTRAINT UPON AMERICAN INDUSTRIALIZATION. AMERICANS SUBLIMATED THEIR NOSTALGIA AND THOUGHT THEY MIGHT ACHIEVE A MIDDLE LANDSCAPE IN WHICH MACHINES WERE SUBORDINATED TO HUMAN USE, AND IN WHICH THEY WOULD AVOID THE WORST EVILS OF URBAN CIVILIZATION.

IN TIME, THE GENIUS FOR INVENTION, AND A PRACTICALITY IN PRODUCING AND SIMPLIFYING, CAME TO BE SEEN AS ATTRIBUTES OF THE AMERICAN CHARACTER. AMERICANS BECAME EAGER DEVELOPERS AND CONSUMERS OF PRODUCTS LIKE THE TELEGRAPH, THE TELEPHONE, THE RAILROAD, RADIO, THE AUTOMOBILE, ELECTRICAL HOUSEHOLD MACHINERY, AIR CONDITIONING, CENTRAL HEATING, PLASTICS, CAMERAS, AND A HOST OF OTHER "IMPROVEMENTS," TO THE EXTENT THAT THEY BECAME IDENTIFIED WITH THE UNITED STATES AS A WAY OF LIFE. THE PRODUCTION OF INDUSTRIAL GOODS, GIVEN THE SCOPE OF AMERICAN NATURAL RESOURCES, APPEARED TO BE THE WAY TO ACHIEVE MATERIAL PROSPERITY AND ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE.

WITHIN THE LAST DECADE, HOWEVER, A SERIES OF CHALLENGES HAVE ERODED THIS POPULAR FAITH. POLLUTION, ECOLOGY MOVEMENTS, THE OIL CRISIS, A RISE IN ENERGY COSTS, A SHIFTING BALANCE OF POLITICAL POWER, ALL HAVE COMBINED TO RAISE NEW QUESTIONS. AMONG THE RESPONSES AMERICANS HAVE MADE IS THE DEVELOPMENT OF WHAT I TERM "TECHNOLOGICAL' NOSTALGIA," A FASCINATION WITH MACHINES AND MACHINE PRODUCTS OF EARLIER DAYS, AND IT IS THE MEANING AND INFLUENCE OF THIS NOSTALGIA THAT I WISH TO SPEAK ABOUT IN MORE DETAIL." INGERSOLL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 30 JUL 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975STATE179338
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: ABALL:JFW
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750262-0992
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t1975077/aaaaagni.tel
Line Count: 93
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN CU
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 TOKYO 10000
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: hartledg
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 JAN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <17 JAN 2003 by ThomasVJ>; APPROVED <03 FEB 2004 by hartledg>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ASP: NEIL HARRIS
TAGS: OEXC, JA
To: TOKYO
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006